

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJ: COMPARISON OF 1972, 1973, 1974 PRE-SUMMIT PRESS

COVERAGE OF U.S.-USSR RELATIONS

REF: MOSCOW 9396

1. SOVIET PRESS COVERAGE OF U.S.-USSR RELATIONS DURING THIS PRE-SUMMIT PERIOD FALLS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 1972 AND 1973 PRE-SUMMITS IN TERMS OF WARMTH. IN THE PRE-SUMMIT PERIOD OF 1972, WHEN THE SOVIETS WERE TESTING A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES WHILE HAIPHONG WAS BEING MINED, CAUTION (MIXED WITH TRADITIONAL HOSTILITY) WAS THE WATCHWORD. IN 1973 VIETNAM WAS NO LONGER A PROBLEM, THE DETENTE LINE HAD BEEN FIRMLY ESTABLISHED AND BREZHNEV WAS OFF TO THE BASTION OF CAPITALISM - HENCE THE UPBEAT TONE IN THE PRESS. TODAY - LESS THAN A WEEK BEFORE THE THIRD SUMMIT MEETING - THE PRESS TREATMENT REFLECTS BOTH CONFIDENCE THAT A BETTER SOVIET-U.S. CONFIDENTIAL

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RELATIONSHIP IS NOW ACCEPTED SOVIET POLICY - NO LONGER IN NEED

OF A HARD SELL - AND A REALIZATION THAT DETENTE HAS NOT MOVED AS FAR OR AS FAST AS THE SOVIETS WOULD HAVE LIKED. THUS THE PRESS LINE IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS HAS BEEN MIXED - VERY POSITIVE ON THE BENEFITS OF SOVIET-U.S. COOPERATION AND ON THE SUMMIT, WHILE CONTINUING (AS IN NON-SUMMIT PERIODS) TO CRITICIZE ASPECTS OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY (LATIN AMERICA, CAMBODIA) AND DOMESTIC CONDITIONS (INFLATION, STRIKES), ON OCCASION RATHER SHARPLY. (IT IS WORTH NOTING IN PASSING THAT SOME OF THE NEGATIVE PROPAGANDA ON U.S. IS PITCHED TO OTHER CONSIDERATIONS, E.G. CSCE BASKET THREE OR THE SOVIET ELECTIONS.)

2. LEADERSHIP SPEECHES IN WEEKS BEFORE SUPREME SOVIET ELECTIONS JUNE 16 GAVE THE SOVIETS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LAY OUT THE CURRENT LINE ON RELATIONS WITH U.S. WHILE SPEECHES VARIED IN WARMTH - BREZHNEV AND KIRILENKO WERE THE MOST CORDIAL, SUSLOV THE COLDEST - THE OVERALL TREATMENT OF THE COURSE OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS WAS POSITIVE, AND MOST SPEAKERS EXPLICITLY WELCOMED THE COMING SUMMIT. THERE WAS, MOREOVER, STRONG EMPHASIS ON THE THEME OF CONTINUITY. KIRILENKO FOR EXAMPLE NOTED THAT POLITICAL CONSULTATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS ARE ACQUIRING A REGULAR NATURE, AND GROMYKO SAID THAT RELATIONS MUST BE GIVEN A MORE STABLE CHARACTER. IN ADDITION TO ADDING WEIGHT TO THE "IRREVERSIBILITY OF DETENTE" THEME, THIS EMPHASIS ON CONTINUITY GIVES THE SOVIET A WAY TO COPE WITH PRESIDENT NIXON'S INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES.

3. THE EUPHORIA OF 1973 IS MISSING. REALISTICALLY, SOVIET COMMENTATORS HAVE FELT THE NEED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF REAL OR PRESUMED SET-BACKS IN THE SOVIET PURSUIT OF DETENTE WITH THE UNITED STATES. ON U.S. DIPLOMATIC SUCCESSES IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE SOVIETS HAVE OPTED FOR A MEDIA POLICY OF DOWNPLAYING, BUT NOT CRITICIZING, U.S. ACHIEVEMENTS. ON MFN, THEY HAVE BEEN SHARP IN ATTACKING JACKSON AND OTHER EXTREMISTS, BUT ALSO CAREFUL NOT TO BLOW THE ISSUE INTO A MAJOR BILATERAL PROBLEM. THE BASIC APPROACH, WHICH CAME OUT STRONGLY IN THE TOLKUNOV IZVESTIAY ARTICLE JUNE 17 (REFTEL), SEEMS DESIGNED FOR DOMESTIC READERS WHO STILL HAVE SOME DOUBTS - THE OVERALL BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, SO THE ARGUMENT GOES, IS MUCH TOO IMPORTANT (LARGELY FOR REASONS OF PEACE) TO BE ALLOWED TO BE DAMAGED BY THIS OR THAT SPECIFIC PROBLEM. A FURTHER EXAMPLE OF BET-

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HEDGING APPEARS IN THE LEAD COMMENTARY IN THE CURRENT U.S.A. MAGAZINE, WHICH WARMS PEOPLE NOT TO MEASURE THIS SUMMIT BY THE NUMBER OF AGREEMENTS SIGNED. FINALLY, FOR THOSE WHO STILL WORRY ABOUT THE OVERALL SHAPE OR PACE OF DETENTE, THERE ARE THE OLD ARGUMENTS - STILL PROMINENT IN CURRENT PRESS TREATMENT - THAT THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE CONTUNES AND THAT THE CORRELATION OF WORLD FORCES HAS CHANGED IN FAVOR OF SOCIALISM (MEANING THAT THE USSR IS NOT NEGOTIATING WITH THE U.S. FROM A POSITION OF

WEAKNESS).

4. IN SHORT, IN THEIR PUBLIC BUILD-UP FOR THIS YEAR'S SUMMIT, THE SOVIETS HAVE TAKEN A MIDDLE POSITION WHICH ANTICIPATES QUESTIONS FROM SEVERAL QUARTERS. FOR IDEOLOGISTS, THEY HAVE CAREFULLY PUT THE SUMMIT IN AN ORTHODOX FRAMEWORK AND HAVE NOT GONE OVERBOARD IN PRAISE OF THE UNITED STATES. FOR THOSE WHO WORRY ABOUT CONCRETE ACHIEVEMENTS, THEY HAVE COUNSELED PATIENCE AND STRESSED LONG-TERM BENEFITS. FOR THOSE WHO FERVENTLY SUPPORT THE CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S., THEY HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT IT IS A FIRM POLICY. WHATEVER HAPPENS AT THE SUMMIT, THE SOVIETS HAVE PUT THEMSELVES IN A GOOD POSITION TO PORTRAY IT TO DIFFERENT DOMESTIC AUDIENCES AS ANOTHER GREAT SUCCESS FOR THE USSR'S - AND BREZHNEV'S - POLICIES.

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